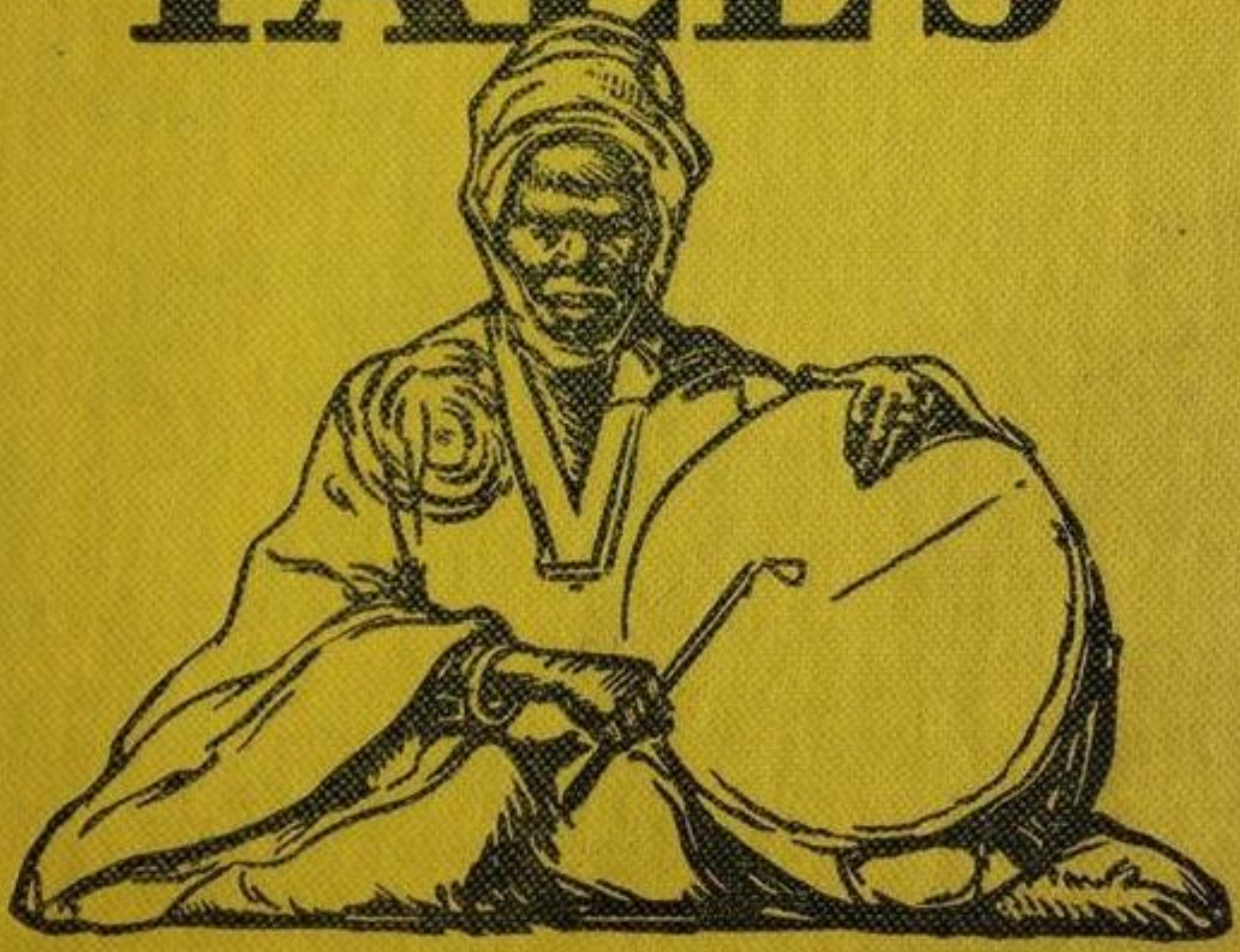
BLACK FOLK TALES



ERICK BERRY

BLACK FOLK TALES

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Retold from the Haussa Of Northern Nigeria, West Africa. With Illustrations by the author

ERICK BERRY

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First Edition

TO MY SON ALLEN

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Foreword

ON the west coast of Africa, only a few degrees north of the Equator, just where the coast line curves eastward and in, if you remember, and where the Niger River, slow and sullen and yellow with mud, slides into the Atlantic, lies Nigeria. Hot, steaming jungles, broad burnt savanna lands that, with the rains, blossom into glorious green again, and mountains that, rocky and tree-covered, lean over tiny red-mud walled and straw-thatched villages. Here live the Haussa people, some thirteen millions of them, traders, tillers of the soil, cattle owners, and the savage tribes of a still older Africa. Black people, all of them. Some are nature-worshipers. Many, and these are the Haussas, are Mohammedans, and in their folk tales mingle the older nature-worship and the fabled people of the Koran. There is, for instance, Solomon —Suliman now—a black man like themselves and, as they are, living in a mud house, with a mud floor, as they have.

Great traders are the Haussa people. They cross the wide desert fearlessly with camel-laden caravans, bringing spices and embroideries, and tales from out

the East. Their robes are stiff with embroidery, their turbans and their manners intricate.

There are other black tribes, simple, trusting in strange gods, worshiping animals and thunder and rain and the sun.

But to all these peoples the village story-teller is a great man. And in the tiny village market, or in the town, thronging with life and bustle and movement, when evening falls and the fires burn high and the tropic night, hot and still, presses closely down and the stars are very near, then can be heard the drums of the native dancers, and the village story-teller beats also on his drum. Then the men and the children and the women gather round him, crouching on their heels, in a circle, with eager faces all turned one way, and his drumming ceases and his tales commence.

Here begin the stories of the Black Folk of west Africa.

ERICK BERRY

THE STORY OF SOLOMON AND THE BIRDS

A STORY, A STORY! Let it be told, let it be told! Here, then, the story.

Now Solomon had taken unto himself a new and young and beautiful wife, named Fatilla. One day Fatilla went to visit another house and saw that the housewife had made for herself a very fine floor which made her house look splendid. And Fatilla considered the floor, envying it, for no such floor was in her own house.

So she said: "The floor is indeed wonderful! What did you mix with the earth of the floor to make it thus so fine?"

"My husband is a hunter," said the other woman. "The blood of the beasts he shoots he brings home. I save this and mix it with the mud of the floor. It is the blood that makes the floor thus."

And Fatilla returned home and kept silence until evening. Solomon spoke to her. She remained silent. Then Solomon asked her:

"What has happened that you are angry?" And Fatilla spoke then:

"I went to call upon a friend and saw that her floor was black, of a smooth blackness, contenting the heart, far better than the floor of the house you have given me. For the blood of the beasts killed by her husband, the hunter, she mixes with the mud of the floor."

"Your desire, oh, wife?" asked Solomon.

"Every morning the birds come to you and hover above your head to shield you from the sun. Kill for me these birds and give me their blood for the floor."

But this Solomon refused to do, and Fatilla withdrew into silence. For several days she neither smiled nor spoke. Finally the great king said:

"In the name of Allah, your wish is yours! Tomorrow when the birds come, some shall be taken and given to you."

"Good!" she replied. "May Allah bring us tomorrow!"

The next morning when the sun had risen and Solomon waited outside his door beneath the shade of a big boabab tree, there was heard no sound of wings and not a single bird appeared. But later the Eagle came drifting down, flapped his wings, and came to the Cock, who said to him:

"Did you hear what the Prophet Solomon said to his wife yesterday?"

"No," said the Eagle, "but I took notice of the birds,

that none came this day to shade the prophet, so I, too, have stayed away."

Then the Cock said: "Solomon has promised his new wife that he will kill some of us and give us to her, that she may mix our blood with her floor. Then the floor will be black and shining."

"O-ho!" replied the Eagle. "The matter is thus? Well, we shall see to that." And so about ten o'clock in the morning the Eagle flew to the Prophet Solomon. His wife, Fatilla, was waiting behind the curtain of the door.

And Solomon said, "Have you been delayed in the town, that you have not been here since dawn?"

The Eagle replied, "We have been arguing on two subjects at home." And Solomon asked what were those subjects and what had the answers been.

"The first," said the Eagle, "was, Which is longer, the night or the day?"

"And what did you answer to that?" asked the Prophet Solomon.

"I said that from the morning, since the first call to prayers, until it is almost time to go to sleep, all this is daytime. Surely the day is longer than the night. Am I not right, O Prophet?"

And the Prophet said that the Eagle was right.

"What was the second question?" he asked the Eagle.

"The second was, Which are the more numerous, men or women?"

"And what did you reply to that?" asked Solomon, for he was surprised at the wisdom of the Eagle.

"I said women, for a man who is led by his wife is no better than a woman. Am I not right, O Prophet?"

And Solomon stopped smiling and was no longer astonished, and replied: "You are right. You may go home and tell the other birds to come tomorrow morning."

And Fatilla, who had been hiding behind the curtain, went without her beautiful floor.

THE TOWN WHERE NO ONE SLEPT

ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN who had two daughters. One daughter was married to a man who lived in a town where no one ever sneezed. The other daughter was married to a man who lived in a town where no one ever slept.

One day the mother cooked a dish of sweetmeats to take to the daughter who lived in the town where no one ever sneezed. As soon as it was ready she put the calabash of sweetmeats on her head and started off to walk to the town. When she arrived, all the household said to her: "Welcome! welcome!"

Food was prepared for her, for the son-in-law said: "See, the mother of my wife has come to visit us."

But the daughter warned her mother: "Do not eat too much of that dish with the pepper in it. You know that no one has ever sneezed in this town, and a sneeze must not overcome you."

But the mother said: "I knew, long before you were born, that no one ever sneezed here."

"Oh, very well, then," replied the daughter. "I'll say no more." And the mother ate every bit of food that was brought to her.

Now when it was time to go to bed the mother wanted to sneeze badly. She had been wanting to ever since the food was eaten, but she did not dare. Finally, after everyone was asleep she stole out of the house and went away to a little wood, where she was able to sneeze without being heard. But all the trees in the little wood had never heard anyone sneeze before.

They were frightened and began to shiver and sing:

"*Umm, umm.* We are not used to this!
Umm, umm. We are not used to this!"

The mother stole back into the house, but the little trees in the wood continued to shiver and sing:

"*Umm, umm.* We are not used to this!
Umm, umm. We are not used to this!"

And in the morning, when the women of the town went out to draw water, they heard the little trees and said: "Who is there who has sneezed in the town?"

So all the people of the town were sent for, and when the daughter came she brought her mother with her. She was frightened because she thought she would be discovered, and indeed when the little trees saw her again they stopped singing. Then the people of the town knew that it was the mother who had sneezed. But as no harm came of it, they, too, learned to sneeze.

Now the mother returned to her own home; but

one day she cooked more sweetmeats and decided to visit her other daughter, the one who had married a man in the town where no one ever slept.

When she arrived the household said: "Welcome! welcome!" and her son-in-law said: "My mother-in-law has come."

So he killed a fowl and sent her a dish of rice and many sweetmeats. But the daughter said to her mother: "Be careful, do not eat too much, lest you become sleepy. You know in this town no one is allowed to sleep."

The mother replied: "Thank you indeed! I knew that before ever you were born!" So the daughter said no more, and the mother ate all she wished.

That night, although she lay down, she managed to keep awake, and in the morning the daughter took up her jar to go to the stream for water and said to her mother:

"See, I have put the breakfast on to boil. Please keep up the fire while I am away." But when the daughter had gone, although her mother managed to replenish the fire for a time, drowsiness overcame her in the end and she lay down and fell fast asleep.

Just then a neighbor came to borrow fire, and when she saw the sleeping woman she commenced to weep and wail and cry: "Alas, the mother-in-law is dead!"

So the drummers were sent for and soon the whole

town was assembled at the house and the drums were saying

> "*Birrim, birrim!* The mother-in-law is dead!
> *Birrim, birrim!* The mother-in-law is dead!"

But the daughter, who was at the stream, heard the drumming and came running up. She cried: "We are accustomed to sleep," and shook her mother, crying: "Wake up! Wake up!"

Then the mother awoke with a start, and the people were terrified.

But they soon saw that there was nothing to be afraid of. And from then all the whole town began to learn to sleep.

THE SPIDER AND THE TWO CHIEFS

THIS STORY is about the Spider.

Once upon a time there was a famine. On land and in the water there was no food. The Spider and all his children had become thin from want of food. Things were in this state when one day the Spider went to the Elephant and said:

"Chief, may Allah prolong your life, The Chief of the Water, the Hippopotamus, sends me to you. He says I am to tell you to give me one hundred baskets of grain, and I am to take them to him. When the harvest season has come he will send you a great horse. Moreover, he says these words are only for the ears of the great ones and you are not to allow anyone else to hear."

The Elephant said: "All right, let it be so. There is no harm in that." And he gave orders that one hundred baskets of grain were to be brought.

Then he sent one hundred youths of the elephants with the baskets, and they took them to the Spider.

The Spider said: "Lay them down here and go back home. I must go into the river and tell the Chief of the Water, that he may send his young men to come for them. For your part, you have finished the hardest of the work."

So the Elephant's young men departed, and the Spider went to his home and called his wife and children. They carried off all the grain and took it home.

When it was again day the Spider went to the river bank and entered into the water. He went to the court of the Chief and asked for permission to speak. It was granted him and he said: "May Allah lengthen your days, O Chief."

And the Chief said: "Amen, O Spider. Whence come you?"

Then the Spider said: "Behold me. I was living just now as usual, when the Chief of the Land, the Elephant, called me to him, and when I went he sent me here to you. He told me to tell you that, although with the famine he has grain foods, he has nothing for making soup. You are to give him one hundred

baskets of fish. When the harvest season has come round he will give you a great horse."

The Hippo answered: "Well, that is all right." And the Spider made haste to add, "His words are only for the ears of the great and you must not mention this to anyone until he comes and talks of it with you."

The Hippo said: "There is no harm in that," and he gave orders that baskets should be brought of fish, one hundred baskets, and sent his youths to carry them to the bank of the river.

Then the Spider said: "It is all right. You go back now, and the elephant's young men shall come and take them. If you stay here when the other youths come, who knows what might happen among you all." And the lads agreed with him and departed.

The Spider went and called his wife and children and they removed all the fish and went off home with them in the hundred baskets.

When the famine was over and the harvest season had come the Elephant said: "Send for the Spider." So the Spider was sought and brought.

Then they said to him: "What about the promise we made with you with regard to the Hippo, the Chief of the Water?"

And the Spider said: "I shall go directly to the Chief of the Water and tell him. The day after tomorrow I shall return."

The Spider went off. For three days he was gone;

then he returned. Now, what he had done was this. He had gone to the river bank and searched out a huge tree and tied to it a very long and strong horse rope which he had made. He took the end of the rope to where the Elephant was and said:

"Behold the rope of the horse which the Hippo gives you. Tomorrow they are going to take this horse from the water, and he says for you to search out a huge tree to tie this rope to. When it is dawn and you see this tree shaking, seize this rope and pull it, for that is the horse pulling the tree."

And the Elephant said: "Is it really so, Spider?"

And the Spider replied, "Yes."

When the dawn came the Elephant assembled the young men.

Now of a truth the Spider had gone to the Hippo, saying:

"The Elephant has given me a horse to bring to you, but it is so great that I am not able to pull it. This rope is long. I have dragged it thus far and brought the horse to the bank of the river, where I have tied it to a tree. When it is dawn, let the boys go and pull, for the horse is very great indeed."

The Hippo agreed. When it was dawn the Hippo's boys came up from the water and found the tree from which the rope was tied. It was swaying about as if it were about to be uprooted. Then they seized hold and pulled.

The Elephant's people also were pulling. When the Elephant's youths were pulling the Hippo's youths, then some more were added. When the Hippo's youths were pulling too strongly for the Elephant's youths, then some more were added to them. And so it went on until evening came and they desisted and lay down. When it was dawn, very early, they rose up, and they pulled again until noon.

Then the Hippo said: "Let them cease and go and ask the Elephant what kind of a horse he has sent me, that none of us is able to pull it and all are tired out."

And the Elephant also said: "You leave off. Let some one go and see what kind of a horse this is that the Chief of the Water has sent me, that none of us can bring it to land."

So the youths went off and they met in the middle of the jungle, and the youths from the Elephants asked the youths from the Hippo, "Where are you going?"

And the youths from the Hippo replied: "We have been sent by our chief to ask the Elephant what kind of a horse he has sent us, since yesterday we have been pulling at it, and again all this morning."

The Elephant's youths replied: "We too are on the same errand. You go back, and we will also. Say that it is a lie that the Spider told. We have not seen any horse."

So they each turned back to their own place. The Hippo's young men went and told him what they had done. So also did the youths of the Elephant, and the Elephant said: "What's all this? I do not owe the Hippo any horse. The Hippo owes me."

When the affair came to be discussed it became clear that the Spider had lied. He it was that had received the food and had eaten it.

But as for the Spider, he had disappeared into the jungle with his wife and children and was not to be found.

WHY THE HARTEBEEST ALWAYS HAS TEARS IN HIS EYES

THIS, THEN, IS A TALE of the old days when animals were as men. Let it be told. Let it be told.

Once there was a great Emir who ruled over a large town with many people. He had also a very beautiful daughter, the like of whose beauty was not to be seen in the whole town. All men who saw her wished her for a wife.

Now when the time came for his daughter to be married, the Emir sent forth a proclamation. He said: "Let all the people come together for hoeing, and he who hoes on that day and whose area hoed in one day is the greatest, shall have my daughter for wife."

And on that day all the suitors gathered together. Now of a truth the Chameleon had heard this. He had, by himself, been making hoeing magic. When all the suitors came out the Chameleon stayed at home. He waited till all those who were hoeing were hard at work and had hoed far away. Then he came out.

Then he struck one blow in the ground with a hoe and climbed on the handle of the hoe and sat down there. The hoe started to hoe. It hoed and it hoed and it fairly flew until it had passed way beyond all the other hoers. The Chameleon got off the handle and sat down and rested. After a while and near sunset the others came along. They were almost up to where the Chameleon sat.

Then the Emir, seeing who had won the race, would not consent that the Chameleon should have his daughter.

So he said again that they should have a race, all the suitors. And that whoever should run fastest in the race might have the girl.

They started to race, and the Chameleon made magic and turned himself into a needle. He leaped and stuck fast in the tail of the Hartebeest.

The Hartebeest ran very fast, very fast in truth. He passed all the other suitors and ran until he came to the door of the house of the Emir. He passed it. But the Chameleon saw the maiden leaving the house

and slid from the Hartebeest's tail, and turning back into himself again, embraced the maiden.

When the Hartebeest came along he met the Chameleon embracing the girl, and he knew that the Chameleon would marry her.

And the Hartebeest wept. From that day to this he has always had tears in his eyes.

That, then, is the tale.

WHY THE OWL FLIES ONLY AT NIGHT

HERE, THEN, IS THE STORY. Hark to it.

Once the Owl committed a theft. She took the thing into her hole and hid it there.

Then the Kite and the Hawk collected together all the birds.

Said the Kite: "Let the Owl be sought and brought before us. No bird shall return to his home until the Owl is found."

But the Owl heard of this and hid herself in the hollow of a tree. She came out only at evening time.

Then the Kite and the Hawk heard that the Owl was with the Ostrich and sought her there.

But the Ostrich replied that she had not seen the Owl.

Then they heard news that the Owl was in the home

of the Crocodile, and they issued an order that the Crocodile should be sought and questioned. But the Crocodile refused to come out. He said that it was no concern of his and he entered the water and hid himself.

Rumor had it that the Owl had taken refuge with the Porcupine, but when she was asked if she had seen the Owl she shot off her quills and refused to answer.

Then the King heard that the Owl was being sought and sent for the Hawk and the Kite to appear before him. But they did not come. So he had traps set for them, and when they were caught he had them brought before him.

"Why seek ye the Owl?" he asked them, and they replied:

"She has committed a theft."

The King said: "What did she steal?"

"She has stolen an egg," they replied.

"Let it go," said the King. "She shall go free." And he released the Kite and the Hawk.

But they were angry, and ever since then the Kite and the Hawk have sought the Owl that they may punish her.

But she does not come out except at night.

THE WATER OF LADI

THIS, THEN, IS THE TALE of the water of Ladi. A certain hunter went into the forest to live and built a hut there. His wife gave him two children, a boy and a girl, and when the old couple died the two were left alone.

And they lived there, and always when the youth went away to hunt he would shut his sister in the house for safety and close the door with thorns, and when he returned from the day's hunting he would stand outside and call:

"Fatismata! Fatismata! Open the door for me to enter." And when she heard this she would open the door that he might come in.

Now of a truth the Hyena overheard this, and one day when the youth was hunting in the forest the Hyena came to the door of the hut and called:

"Fathmita! Fathmita! Open the door that I may enter."

But the girl said: "No. I know who you are. You have a lisp. You are the Hyena."

Then the Hyena went off and sought the Lion. From the Lion he asked for medicine that would cure

a lisp, and the Lion gave it to him. He came back to the door of the hut and called:

"Fatismata! Fatismata! Open the door that I may enter."

So the maiden opened the door, and the Hyena seized her and swallowed her and disappeared into the forest.

And at evening the brother of the girl returned from hunting, but when he stood in front of the door of his hut and called, "Fatismata! Fatismata! Open the door that I may enter," there was only silence. He called again, but again no one answered him. He repeated his call three times, and then he pushed on the door. It swung open and he entered. The hut was empty and his sister was gone.

Then he came out, lifted his calabash to his head, and traveled until he reached the mouth of the Hyena's cave. He saw the girl's waist beads and skirt cloth lying at the mouth of the hole. And he said: "The Hyena has done this thing." And he passed on.

Now there was a certain pool where all the wild animals of the place came to drink water. There was no other water but this. The youth went there, and he knelt down and, taking his magic calabash, drew up all the water from the pool into it. Then he climbed into a tall tree and waited there. There was no water left in the pool.

Then came a herd of elephants to the pool. They were about to drink when the youth called out:

"You, there, Elephant, where are you going?"

And the head Elephant replied: "We are going to the water of Ladi to drink."

Then said the youth: "There is no water in the pool of Ladi. When you have given up the one who has eaten my sister, then I will give you back the waters of Ladi."

And the Elephant replied: "There is nothing in me but my stomach." And he went and lay down with the other elephants.

A herd of bush cows came up and the boy called to one of them: "You, Bush Cow, where are you going?"

And the Bush Cow replied: "We are going to drink at the water of Ladi."

And the youth in the tree replied: "The water of Ladi has dried. When you give me the one who has eaten my sister, then I will give you back the water."

But the Bush Cow replied that he had nothing inside him but his stomach, and, like the Elephant, he went and lay down and waited.

Whatever herd of wild animals came up to drink, the boy asked for his sister. They, too, made answer so, and passed on and lay down, panting for thirst, until all the animals in the forest had passed. There

remained only the Hyena and his family. They came up.

The Hyena who had eaten the maiden was in front. He was very thirsty and in haste to drink. And the youth called down: "You, Hyena, where are you going?"

And the Hyena replied: "I am going to the water of Ladi." Whereat the youth said: "The water of Ladi is dried. If you will give me back my sister I will give you back the water of Ladi."

The Hyena was silent. What was there he could say? Then the youth said again: "When you give me back my sister, I will give you back the water of Ladi." He said this three times, and the Hyena said nothing.

But the Lion, who was also thirsty and waiting for a drink, became angry and leaped up and caught the Hyena and tore him in two. And the maiden came out. And the lion said:

"Behold, your sister!"

So the youth poured out the water for them because he had found his sister alive. And the two went home again to their hut in the forest.

THE GOAT AND THE HYENA

ONCE THERE WAS A GOAT who went for a walk in the evening with her kid. They walked and they walked until very late, and could not find their way back. They had lost their road. At last they saw a house ahead of them.

When they got to the house they saw a Hyena sitting there. It was her house, and her children were with her.

"Welcome!" said the Hyena.

So they all entered the hut and sat down to talk. After a while the Hyena got up and brought some grain and commenced to grind it, but the Goat said: "Let me do that for you."

"Indeed, no!" replied the Hyena. "Does a guest grind?"

But the Goat persisted, and finally the Hyena let her take the grinding-stone. As for the Hyena, she watched the young Kid till the Kid became frightened for fear that the Hyena would eat him. He went and stood close to his mother, the Goat.

Then she said: "Now when I sing you must take up

the chorus," and the Kid said: "Very well." So the Goat began her song, saying

"I have killed ten elephants." And the Kid said: "It is true."

"I have killed ten lions." And the Kid said: "It is true."

"I have killed ten leopards." And the Kid said: "It is true."

"I have killed ten hyenas." And the Kid said: "Hush, O mother! Do not speak thus. If the Hyena hears, she will run away and leave us without any food!"

But the Hyena did hear, and said: "What did you sing, Goat?"

And the Goat replied, singing: "I have eaten ten elephants." And the Kid said: "It is true."

"I have eaten ten lions." And the Kid said: "It is true."

"I have eaten ten leopards." And the Kid said: "It is true."

"I have eaten ten hyenas. . . ."

Then the Hyena said: "Oh, let me send my cubs to get water for us to drink." But when she got them out of the hut she said to them: "Run off, escape, and do not return till this dangerous creature has departed. This is too much for us." So they fled and disappeared into the forest.

When they had gone, the Hyena returned to her

guests and sat dowu, but after she had waited a little while and the Goat was still singing, the Hyena said: "Well, O guest, I sent my cubs to get water, but they have not returned. Excuse me while I go and look for them."

Then the Hyena went off on a run, and the Goat and her Kid bolted the door and ate up all the supper and spent a peaceful night.

THE MAGPIES AND THE GREEDY SPIDER

ONCE THERE WAS A SPIDER who was very greedy indeed. One morning he came out of his house and saw some very large mango pits around his door.

"What wonderful mangoes those must have been!" he thought, licking his lips hungrily. "I wonder where they came from."

A few mornings later he saw some more mango pits outside his door. He became more and more anxious to have some of those wonderful mangoes. They must be very large and juicy indeed; in fact, quite delicious, to have such large pits. So he determined to watch and see where they came from. For several mornings he got up very early. And then he saw some

Magpies flying past the house. They were dropping the pits of the mangoes they ate as they flew.

"A-ha!" thought the Spider. "Those Magpies must go to a particular place for those mangoes. I will ask them."

So he went to the house of the Magpies and asked them about it. "Where did you get such wonderful mangoes?" he asked.

And they replied: "Over there, on an island, far away."

So he asked: "When you are going next time, will you not ask me to go also?"

And the Magpies answered: "Very well." And he went home.

A few days later the Magpies came for him. "We are going to the island of the mangoes," they said. Two of them took hold of the Spider and they flew thus, holding him as they flew. They flew a long way, until they reached the island.

When they had arrived at the tree, every fruit that the Spider saw was ripe he claimed as part of his share, and the Magpies let him have it. So that not one of them had any fruit; the Spider ate it all.

Now when the Spider had finished they let him go to sleep in a tree. Then the Magpies flew away home without him. He slept for quite a long time, for he had eaten much, and when he awoke he found that he was alone on the island. There was no way for

him to get home, for he had no wings. Then he went down the tree and gazed at the water. Perhaps he might wade. He picked up a small stick and threw it into the water, saying: "If the water is deep here the stick will sink."

But the stick rose to the surface, and the Spider said, "Ah, the water is shallow," and jumped in.

But the water was deep and he sank and was drowned.

THE MAIDEN AND THE SARAKIN PUMPKIN

THIS, THEN, IS A STORY about a pumpkin and a maiden. There was a certain rich man named Alabarma. For many years he had no children, and then his favorite wife gave him a child, a girl, whom they named Fatilla.

Alabarma loved Fatilla exceedingly, and whatever she asked for, that thing he gave her.

One day the mother took the little Fatilla on her back and they went for a walk into the bush, the wild country.

And Fatilla saw a great pumpkin vine. On it was one small pumpkin. That was all the vine had; there was not any other; and Fatilla said to her mother:

"Mother, pluck the baby pumpkin for me to play with."

But the mother said: "Fatilla, how is this? The poor vine has only one solitary baby pumpkin. It will be sad if we pluck its only baby."

Then Fatilla began to cry and her mother said:

"If you are going to cry you must just cry, but I

am not going to pluck the solitary baby pumpkin to give you."

They returned home and the little girl continued weeping. Her father, Alabarma, asked the cause, and her mother told the tale from the beginning.

And Alabarma, being able to deny his daughter nothing, said; "Go back and pluck the baby pumpkin and give it to her." So the mother went back and plucked the pumpkin and brought it.

Then from that day the pumpkin commenced to follow the maiden. It kept saying: "Meat I must eat. Fatilla. Meat I must eat." Alabarma said: "Put it among the goats."

So they took it and put it among the goats. It ate them all up. It was put among some others. It ate them all up. And so on until he had devoured three hundred and fifty flocks of goats. But the pumpkin always returned and said: "Meat I must eat, Fatilla. Meat I must eat."

They came and told her father, and he said: "Put it among the sheep."

It was taken, and ate up a flock of seven hundred and fifty sheep. It came back and kept following the maiden, saying: "Meat I must eat, Fatilla. Meat I must eat."

And so it went on for a long time. Always it followed the maiden, and the pumpkin grew and grew and grew. It ate up the cattle and it ate up the pigeons

and it ate up the camels and it followed the maiden around always.

And then finally one day Fatilla turned on it and cried: "Oh, I am tired of you, pumpkin, always following me and always eating meat." And she seized a stick with which corn was pounded, and struck the pumpkin a great blow.

And suddenly the pumpkin burst open and out stepped a beautiful youth.

He cried: "Fatilla, I am Sarakin Pumpkin, Emir of all the pumpkins." And he was very grateful that she had set him free.

So Fatilla became his favorite wife. That, then, is the story.

THE LION AND THE SQUIRREL

THIS IS A TALE about the Beasts of the Forest. The Lion was killing them and eating them so fast that one day the beasts met together and said: "Look here. The Lion will soon annihilate us. Let us take counsel to see what we can do to save ourselves."

So they all assembled and went together to the Lion. They said to him: "O Great One, Elder Brother of the Forest, we have something to ask you." And they continued: "We will bring you one of our number to eat every morning if you will leave the rest of us alive."

The Lion thought a while, but finally agreed to this, and they went off.

Next morning they drew lots and the lot fell upon the Gazelle. So the others seized the Gazelle and took her to the Lion. Then the Lion killed her and ate her and did not hurt any of the others. The following morning the Beasts did the same thing. This time it was the Roan Antelope. They took him to the Lion, who killed him and ate him, but let the others go.

This went on every day until at last the lot fell to

the Squirrel. The others seized him and were about to take him to the Lion, when he said: "No, no! let me go. I will go to the Lion of my own free will."

Then they said, "Very well," and released him.

The Squirrel went to his hole and fell asleep and did not go out before noon. But the Lion in his den began to feel hungry, for nothing had been brought for him. He arose in anger and went with much roaring to look for the Beasts of the Forest.

The Squirrel came out of his hole and climbed a tree near a well. He watched the Lion from far off, and when he had passed the Squirrel called out: "What is making you roar?"

The Lion replied: "Ever since daybreak I have been waiting for you. Yet you have brought me nothing."

Then the Squirrel from the top of the tree said: "Well, look here. We cast lots and the lot fell upon me, and I was coming to you and bringing some honey, when another Lion in this well stopped me and stole the honey."

Then the Lion exclaimed: "Where is this Lion?"

And the Squirrel came down and said: "He is in the well, but he says that he is stronger than you are."

Then the Lion was furious and ran to the well. He stopped at the edge and looked in and saw another Lion looking at him. In reality it was only his own reflection. Then the Lion abused him, and the echo in the well roared back at him.

Again he abused him, and again the Lion in the well, his own echo, roared back at him. Finally, in a rage, the Lion sprang into the well and sank in the water and was drowned.

Then the Squirrel returned to where the Beasts were and said: "I have killed the Lion, so you can feed in the forests in peace. As for me, I am going to live in my hole." And he went home.

ANOTHER STORY OF THE SPIDER

ONCE THE CROWN BIRD said to the Guinea Fowl: "Will you go with me on a journey?"

But just then the Spider came up and said: "Come with me. I am going to visit the home of my mother-in-law."

Then the Guinea Fowl said: "Your journey is the more important. Let us go together, you and I."

So they started to go to the town where the Spider's parents lived.

While they were still on the road the Spider said to the Guinea Fowl: "See this grass? If, when we are arrived in the town, they bring us some ground nuts, you come back here and get some of this grass, so that we can roast them. It looks very good for that."

"Very well," said the Guinea Fowl.

They went farther along the road, and the Spider said: "There is a spoon. If when we have arrived at the town they bring us some porridge, you come back here and get the spoon, so that we can eat it."

The Guinea Fowl said, "Very well," and they traveled on.

Soon they arrived at the house. They were made welcome and porridge was made and brought to them, so the Spider said to the Guinea Fowl: "Go, get the spoon and bring it." As soon as she had gone to get the spoon the Spider ate up all the porridge except a little bit, and when she had returned he said: "O you lazy one! You have been a long time going. People have since come and taken away the porridge."

Then he said: "But see, they have brought ground nuts. Get the good grass that we passed, and bring it here, that we may roast them." So the Guinea Fowl went off for the grass, and when she returned she found that the Spider had eaten up all the ground nuts. He said: "You have been so long that they have taken away all the ground nuts."

Next morning the Spider said: "Now we must go home."

So the Spider's load was tied up, and that of the Guinea Fowl also, and they started off on the road. Soon they came to the bank of a big river and the

Spider lighted a fire and said: "Stop here. I am going to see if the river is too high to cross. If you hear me fall into the water you will know that I have drowned, for I cannot swim." So he went on and took a stone and threw it into the river so that it made a noise—*plomp*. When the Guinea Fowl heard this she cried: "Alas! the Spider is dead, poor thing!" and threw herself into the fire that she might also die.

Then the Spider came back and pulled the dead Guinea Fowl out of the fire and plucked her feathers and ate her. Then he took the Guinea Fowl's load and tied it on to his own and went off home.

Some time afterward he went to see the Crown Bird. He said to the Crown Bird: "I am going to take a journey to see my mother-in-law. Will you come with me on the journey?" The Crown Bird agreed to that, so they started.

As they were travelling they came to some grass and the Spider said: "That is very nice grass. When we have arrived at the town, if they bring us some ground nuts, you come back here for the grass, so that we may roast them." But the Crown Bird picked the grass on the sly and hid it.

Then they traveled along a way and the Spider saw a spoon and he said to the Crown Bird: "There is a good spoon. If when we get to the town they give us

porridge, you come back for this spoon, that we may eat it."

"Very well," said the Crown Bird. But she took the spoon and hid it.

Soon they arrived at the town. Porridge was brought them for supper and the Spider said: "Oh, you go back and get the spoon. I will wait here for you." But the Crown Bird said: "I thought that a good idea, so I brought it along." But the Spider was very angry, so that he pushed the porridge toward the Crown Bird and said, "You eat it" and the Crown Bird ate all but a very little bit.

Soon after this ground nuts were brought them, and the Spider said: "Remember the grass along the road? Go and get that, that we may roast the ground nuts." But the Crown Bird said: "I thought that a good idea, so I brought some along." The Spider was furious, and cried: "Take the ground nuts and eat them." But when she had roasted them and eaten all but a few, the Spider snatched the rest and ate them.

Next morning they said: "We must be going home." So the Spider's load was bound up for him, and the Crown Bird's for her, and they took them and started off. Soon they arrived at the bank of the river, and the Spider lighted a fire and said; "Stay here. I am going along to see if the river is too full to cross. If you hear me fall into the water you will know I have drowned, for I cannot swim." So he went along and

took a stone and threw it into the water and it made a sound like *plomp*. Then the Crown Bird went and got one of the Spider's long boots and put it on the fire, while she herself crawled into the Spider's load and hid. Soon the Spider came and searched in the fire and found the boot and ate it. "Well," said he, "the Guinea Fowl was certainly more juicy than this Crown Bird." So he took the Crown Bird's load and tied it on his own and started off home.

Then the Crown Bird, who was inside the load, cried: "The Spider is a fool. He has eaten his own boot!"

And the Spider was so frightened that he threw off the loads and ran away into the forest. The Crown Bird crawled out and went home with both loads.

That, then, is the story.

THE RAM AND THE YOUNGEST SON

THERE WAS ONCE A CERTAIN MAN who was very rich. Among his possessions was an old Ram. He had three sons also. The elder two he loved very much, but Auta, the youngest, he did not love.

Now he was about to die, so he summoned his eldest son to the door of his hut and said: "When I am dead, say that you do not want any of my possessions except the old Ram."

But the son replied: "What! There are great riches here. What should I do with an old Ram?"

So the father replied: "Very well." And he summoned the second and said: "When I am dead, say that you do not want any of my possessions save the old Ram."

And the second son replied even as had the first: "I see that you are very rich. Why should I be content with an old Ram."

So the father replied: "Very well." And summoned his youngest son, Auta, whom he did not love, and said to him:

"Listen to me. When I am dead, say that you want none of my possessions save the old Ram."

And Auta replied: "Father, even now, when you are alive, riches are of no account to me. They will matter even less when you are here no more." And he continued: "The Ram will be enough for me."

So the Father said: "Good. And remember that whatever you have to eat, give some to the Ram first; then you may eat also." And the son answered: "I will remember."

Now when the father had ceased speaking, he died, and there was wailing and wailing and wailing. Then Auta took the Ram and departed, and people said: "Ah, there is one who made a foolish promise. There are riches, but he has given up his claim to them and has taken only the old Ram."

So Auta traveled on and on and on. And when he got water to drink he gave some to the old Ram, that he might drink first. At last they came to the hut of a Weaver who was very poor, for he had nothing to eat. When Auta had saluted the house, the Weaver said: "O stranger, do you wish to rest here?"

And Auta said: "Yes."

"Very well," said the other. "But I have no food for myself, much less any to give you."

Now the Weaver had a wife whom he loved, and she had a daughter. He also had a second wife, whom he did not love, and she also had a daughter.

And the Weaver said to his beloved wife. "Woman, draw some water for the stranger to drink."

But she replied: "Poof! I have no water in my hut. I have nothing to give the stranger."

Then the Weaver said to his unloved wife: "Go, draw some water for the stranger to drink."

The unloved wife had a little corn in her bin, about a handful, and she ground it and put it in the water and took it to Auta to drink. He gave it to the Ram first, and they said: "What! Drink, then, yourself. The Ram will get his own food."

But Auta said: "No, no. This will do for both of us." So he gave it first to the Ram, and he drank, and then Auta drank of it.

In the evening, when the sun had set, the first wife said: "Good gracious! Is this stranger going to sleep here?"

And the Weaver said: "Yes. Have you any corn with which to make him some supper?"

And she replied: "I? All the corn I have left is one handful. And I am going to make supper for my daughter. I shall not give it to a stranger."

Then he said to his unloved wife: "Is there a little corn in your hut, enough to make supper for the stranger?" And she said: "All I have is one handful, but I will make gruel and give it to him." So she made gruel of the handful of corn and gave it to the stranger; and when he had taken it he gave it to the

Ram to eat first, and then he ate also, and they rested until daybreak.

And in the morning the Ram said to Auta: "Arise and let us go. Accompany me to the edge of the forest."

So they started off, and the Weaver said: "Are you going to leave us?" And Auta replied: "Oh no! We are going on a little way, but will return."

Now when they had reached the edge of the forest the Ram said: "Stay here." And he went on further and passed to and fro in the long grass and then returned to the youth, and when he came up he said: "Go, and wherever you see that I have been through the long grass, go also."

When he went he came upon two hundred horses with their bridles and saddles, all most beautiful, and royal caparisons, and he returned to the Ram and said: "I have seen about two hundred horses with their bridles and saddles."

And the Ram said: "Good. Stay here." And he went again into the long grass and passed to and fro and returned to the youth and said: "Go, and wherever you see I have been through the long grass, go also."

And he went, and he saw about two hundred grooms, with each a rug upon his arm. And when he had returned and told the Ram he said: "Good. Let each groom hold a horse." And when they had done

this the Ram said: "Let us return to the hut of the Weaver."

When they arrived, the Weaver and his wives stared at the horses surrounding his house and said: "Certainly that stranger has not gone for good; his horsemen have come." And as he stared the Ram came up and said: "Yes, it is indeed the stranger. We have not left you." And then he continued: "Take all these horses to the second wife, the unloved one."

So the horses and their trappings and the grooms belonging to them were given to the second wife, and the Ram said to Auta: "Come, let us return to the edge of the forest."

When they reached there the Ram again walked away through the long grass, and again told Auta to follow where he had gone. And Auta did as he had been told and along the path there were three hundred slaves, each with a load of household goods, and grain and gold upon his head. Then again the Ram said: "Now let us return to the house where we lodged." And when they arrived there the Ram ordered that all the slaves with their loads should be given to the second wife.

And when they were handed over the Weaver came to Auta. "My first wife offers to you her only daughter," he said.

But the Ram said, no, this was not to be. The daughter of the second wife was the one to marry

Auta. And it was indeed as the Ram had directed. Auta married the daughter of the unloved wife, who had been kind to him, and the Ram had an honored place in their household until he died of very old age.

This, then, is the story.

THE LAZY FROG

ONCE THERE WAS A MONKEY who was tired of living alone, so he went to the Frog.

"Come and live with me," he said to the Frog. "I think we will do very well together."

The Frog agreed to this, and they did indeed get on very well until the rainy season came. The first night it rained the Frog was cold and wet and miserable. He complained bitterly.

"Very well," said the Monkey. "Tomorrow we will beat bark cloth and make ourselves some cloaks to keep us warm."

In the morning, however, the sun was out, and when the Monkey, remembering how cold the Frog had been the night before, suggested that they beat bark cloth for cloaks, the Frog said:

"Oh, let it go today. We are surely warm enough."

But that night it rained again, and again the Frog complained bitterly of the weather.

"We will beat bark cloth for cloaks tomorrow," said the Monkey. But when the morning came the sun shone and the Frog was too lazy to work.

This went on for some time. Each night the Frog would complain of the cold and rain, and each morning the Frog would forget and refuse to work. At last the Monkey, disgusted, went away and decided he would rather live alone.

The Frog still hoots and howls when the rain comes down, but remains silent in the sunshine.